

Fetterman says he ‘almost died’ after ignoring heart condition

With a Friday concession from McCormick in the GOP primary, the lieutenant governor will face Mehmet Oz in November

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Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, the Democratic nominee in the state’s Senate contest, said Friday that he “almost died” after suffering a stroke last month, in a statement revealing that his condition was far more serious than his campaign had previously indicated.

Fetterman, 52, suffered a stroke May 13 and later had a pacemaker implanted. He said Friday that he should have taken his health more seriously, including taking medication that a doctor prescribed for him in 2017.

Fetterman’s campaign also released a letter from his doctor stating that the candidate has a condition called cardiomyopathy, a disease that makes it harder for the heart to deliver blood to the body, but that he will be “fine” if he continues to take his medications, get enough exercise and improve his diet.

Notably, Fetterman’s campaign did not disclose any information about his cardiomyopathy diagnosis last month when he had the pacemaker implanted.

“The stroke I suffered on May 13 didn’t come out of nowhere,” Fetterman said in a statement Friday. “Like so many others, and so many men in particular, I avoided going to the doctor, even though I knew I didn’t feel well. As a result, I almost died.”

He added: “I didn’t do what the doctor told me. But I won’t make that mistake again.”

Fetterman did not offer a date on which he plans to return to the campaign trail. He [has been sidelined for weeks](#) in what is viewed as one of the most consequential Senate races in the country.

On the Republican side, ex-hedge fund chief executive David McCormick conceded to former television personality and heart surgeon Mehmet Oz late on Friday, saying he couldn't make up the deficit in the vote recount. Oz will now face Fetterman in the general election.

"We spent the last 17 days making sure that every Republican vote was counted in a way that would result in the will of Pennsylvanian voters being fulfilled ... That's what this process is all about," McCormick said.

In the letter released Friday by Fetterman's campaign, the candidate's cardiologist, Ramesh Chandra, said he last met with Fetterman on Thursday for a follow-up after his stroke.

Chandra said he first met with Fetterman in 2017, when the Pennsylvania Democrat was experiencing swelling in his feet. Chandra diagnosed Fetterman with "atrial fibrillation, an irregular heart rhythm, along with a decreased heart pump" and prescribed him medications. The two were supposed to meet for a follow-up appointment months later, Chandra said, but instead, Fetterman went five years without visiting a doctor.

"Yesterday I talked to John about how, while afib was the cause of his stroke, he also has a condition called cardiomyopathy, which is why doctors in Lancaster chose to implant the [pacemaker]," Chandra said.

"The prognosis I can give for John's heart is this: If he takes his medications, eats healthy, and exercises, he'll be fine," he added. "If he does what I've told him, and I do believe that he is taking his recovery and his health very seriously this time, he should be able to campaign and serve in the U.S. Senate without a problem."

Fetterman's wife, Gisele Fetterman, said in an interview last month that her husband has been resting at their home in Braddock, Pa., and can't lift heavy objects.

Pennsylvania law gives party nominees until Aug. 15 to withdraw from a general election. In addition, should Fetterman's health decline and he need to be replaced on the ballot, the executive committee of the state's Democratic Party would meet to pick the backup nominee within 30 days of Fetterman's withdrawal, according to party bylaws.

At least one Pennsylvania Democrat on Friday dismissed the notion that it might be necessary to replace Fetterman on the ballot.

"You want to replace someone who won every county? No," said former Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell (D).

He called Fetterman the best retail politician that Pennsylvania has seen in two decades and said that it would be "a minus" if Fetterman can't do as many events as he did during the primary.

Annie Linskey contributed to this report.